

The Federal Communications Commission, under its new Chairman Michael Powell, is likely to weaken or eliminate longstanding safeguards that protect the public interest. These rules have been designed to constrain the power of large media companies. They are designed to help guard against a handful of powerful media companies from owning most of the country's TV and radio stations, cable systems, and newspapers. Companies such as AOL Time Warner, Viacom (CBS), NBC (General Electric) and a few others want to end these safeguards. The Internet is also threatened, because these media giants will control much of the access to the new broadband medium. It is critical in the new digital era that we have a more open, diverse, and competitive environment. More expression is needed, not less.

Contrary to industry claims, the ownership rules neither ban protected speech nor "prevent competition." These rules do the reverse. The companies are attempting to rewrite history, ignoring the massive consolidation that has gone on over the last twenty years. While there may be more outlets, there are fewer owners of all those networks and channels.